

The Contribution of the Arusha Spouses' Association to the Legacy of the ICTR

Abubacarr Tambadou*

While there cannot be any doubt about the judicial legacy of the ICTR in respect of accountability for international crimes and its contribution to peace and reconciliation in Rwanda following the 1994 genocide, there is another softer aspect of the ICTR's legacy which is often overlooked but which has also contributed to the growth of Arusha as the city host of the Tribunal. With a population of just over 179,000 in 1995 when the Tribunal was established in the city, Arusha city today claims a population of over 516,000 people representing a dramatic increase during the 20 years since the ICTR was established in the city.¹ This small but beautiful city located in the northern part of Tanzania towards the Kenyan border is in the heart of Tanzania's tourism industry. It lies at the foot of Africa's highest mountain Mount Kilimanjaro at 5895 meters high and the city is also the gateway to the wonderful wildlife parks of the Serengeti and Ngorongoro. Every year, thousands of tourists flock the city to visit this amazing scenery at the place US President Bill Clinton described as the Geneva of Africa.

The establishment of the ICTR in Arusha city, with over one thousand local and international staff members most of whom were based in the city, and some in the Rwandan capital of Kigali, had a major impact on local life in such a small city. The impact of the presence of the ICTR on the local economy alone in Arusha was so significant that even the Arusha City Council recognized this fact.² However, with such huge presence of expatriates in such a small city, this created a set of challenges for both the Tribunal's expatriate community and the local community in Arusha city

¹Report of the United Republic of Tanzania Prime Minister's Office on Regional Administration and Local Government, Arusha Regional Commissioners Office, 27 February 2014.

² Report of the United Republic of Tanzania Prime Minister's Office on Regional Administration and Local Government, Arusha Regional Commissioners Office, 27 February 2014.

The biggest of these challenges was the need to maintain a delicate economic and social balance between a group of reasonably paid international civil servants on one hand and on the other a local indigenous population 16 percent of whom live below the food poverty line.³ It is undeniable that the cost of living in the city of Arusha increased following the establishment of the Tribunal in the city. The price of basic commodities skyrocketed as some local merchants sought to exploit the presence of the huge dollar paid expatriate community now flexing their economic muscle in the city. But how the local merchants decided to conduct their private businesses was no fault of the expatriate community.

Tribunal staff were however, welcomed by the generality of the local population. The presence of international Tribunal staff filled a significant gap in the informal sector of the local economy. House helps, drivers, watchmen, security companies and maids were all employed in the service of ICTR staff members. Individual staff members took it upon themselves to assist those in need in isolated cases such as making regular donations to charities and orphanages and sponsoring individual students in schools and colleges, sometimes even sponsoring their domestic workers to embark on training courses to improve their chances of gainful employment after the departure of their employers from the Tribunal and the city.

It was against this background that in 2005, ten years after the establishment of the ICTR in the city of Arusha, came probably the single biggest event that was to shape the future relations between the two groups, and which also helped to transform the public image of the Tribunal and smoothed the relationship between the local community and ICTR international staff members. Under the leadership of Mrs Fatou Jaye Jallow, spouse of the Chief Prosecutor of the ICTR Hassan B. Jallow, a group of women, some of whom were spouses of Tribunal staff members and others working for the various organs of the ICTR, came together to create the Arusha Spouses' Association (ASA). The creation of ASA and its subsequent activities significantly helped to dispel most if not all of the negative publicity against the generality of ICTR staff members in Arusha. It

³ Tanzania Country Report on the MDGs2010, DSM 26 September 2011.

was the beginning of a coordinated and well organized charitable work at a city-wide level by people associated with the ICTR which was distinct from the individual isolated efforts by private staff members. ASA was singularly focused and engaged in altruistic charitable work for the exclusive benefit of the most deprived of Arushian society. It wanted to reach out to Arushian society at large and to support the local community. Its goal was to make a positive difference in the lives of as many sectors of the local population as possible, and its mission statement to lift as many ordinary Arushian lives out of poverty. The task was as daunting as the intention was noble.

The idea of ASA came about when some spouses of ICTR staff members felt there was a need to come together in the form of an organized group in order to look for ways and means of generating funds with a view to providing material and financial support to the poor and needy communities in and around Arusha. The ultimate aim was to provide a concerted effort by the community of expatriates working at the Tribunal to extend a helping hand to those less fortunate in Arushian society. One of its goals was to also complement the work of the ICTR and thereby contribute towards the legacy that the ICTR hopes to leave behind at the completion of its mandate. At the time of its creation in January 2005, ASA had 10 members rising up to 24 at the peak of its activities. The members came from different countries mostly from the African continent including Chad, Burkina Faso, The Gambia, Mali, Benin, Mauritania, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal and Russia. In November 2014, almost 10 years after its very first charity event in June 2005, ASA organized its last charity event in the form of a Children's Fun Day both in order to raise funds for a local water project and in order to celebrate the enormous success of the Association in transforming lives in and around Arusha city during this period. The proceeds of the Children's Fun Day were used for the drilling of a borehole fitted with a hand pump at the Lemara Primary School in order to provide clean water to almost two thousand school children there.

Between January 2005 and November 2014, ASA raised and donated over sixty million Tanzanian Shillings and thirty three thousand United States Dollars to

various projects including support to orphanages, schools, HIV/AIDS victims, health care authorities, sanitary projects and to the victims and survivors of the 1994 Rwandan genocide against the Tutsis during which moderate Hutus and others who opposed the genocide were killed. Out of these amounts, the sixty million Tanzanian Shillings was spent to support projects related to orphanages, schools, victims of HIV/AIDS, and the Mount Meru Hospital. Twenty five thousand United States Dollars was spent on water projects, and eight thousand United States Dollars was devoted to the genocide survivors. The funding for these charitable projects was derived from a variety of sources and through various fundraising activities. ASA members made monthly contributions to the Association, and received generous donations from ICTR staff members. Corporate sponsorship of fundraising events by local businesses in Arusha was secured and events such as cultural shows, gala dinners, children's fun days, luncheon sale of exquisite African and continental cuisine and other items of value were also organized in the effort to raise funds in support of the projects.

Indeed, the ASA gala dinners and cultural shows were the annual social gathering highlight of the Tribunal and everyone looked forward to them every year. Raffle tickets were sold and drawn during the events and the lucky winners often donated their prizes back to ASA for sale in order to raise more money for their activities. There was also the occasional sale by auction to the highest bidders and the proceeds of which also went towards the funds for the ASA projects. All the Principals of the three organs of the Tribunal together with their staff as well as defence counsel practicing at the Tribunal and ordinary members of the local community in Arusha city supported and attended these events every year. It was the unique occasion that brought all these parties together under one roof at the same time for a good cause every year.

The main beneficiaries of the ASA funded projects included the Oloirien Lutheran Church, the Oloirien Mosque, the Moivoi Primary School, the Engutoto Community Mosque, the Engutoto Church, the Themis Primary school, the Lemara Primary School, the Mount Meru Hospital, the Kijenge Primary School, and several other projects in Mushono, Sombentini and in Rwanda. While a

majority of these projects involved the drilling of boreholes for the provision of clean water for thousands of people, particularly school children, in very disadvantaged communities in and around Arusha, other projects funded by ASA included the refurbishment of the labour ward of the Mount Meru Hospital and the donation of valuable and much needed medical equipment to the ward as well as the provision of financial and material assistance to nursing mothers and new born babies. ASA also provided assistance to orphanages and schools for handicapped children in the form of donations of food items, school uniforms, furniture and other material in addition to visiting these centres during the festive seasons to share gifts and spend time with the recipients. There was also support to the genocide survivors and orphans and widows in Rwanda.

These ASA charity projects also attracted the local press who reported on them and as a result of which ordinary members of the local community became aware of the charitable activities which they came to associate with the ICTR. While it cannot be stated with any degree of certainty that the improved relationship between the local community and the ICTR expatriate community during the last years of the Tribunal's existence in Arusha was owed to the contributions of ASA in the fight against poverty in the city, it cannot also be dismissed as an irrelevant factor in the consideration of this issue. In any event, one thing is certain, ASA significantly contributed to the positive image of the ICTR in the city of Arusha. Its charity projects in the city has left a lasting positive legacy of the Tribunal among the local community which will outlive any memories that ordinary members of the local community will have of the ICTR itself. The dedication and commitment of ASA members to their charitable activities was only matched by their desire to transform the lives of ordinary people in the city of Arusha, and they have succeeded to a very large degree in achieving this.